## Meeting Notes

**Improving Student Learning at Scale Team Meeting**

January 6th, 1pm-4pm

ESD 113, Olympia

**Attendees (listed alphabetically by first name):**

Bill More (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges), Rep. Chris Reykdal (Legislature), Chris Barron (Partnership for Learning), Christine McCabe (College Spark), Cody Eccles (Council of Presidents), David Brenna (Professional Educator Standard’s Board), Gene Sharratt (Washington Student Achievement Council), Gil Mendoza (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction), Joe Willhoft (Smarter Balanced), Kevin Chase (Grandview School District), Marcie Maxwell (Governor’s Office), Melissa Beard (Office of Financial Management), Scott Seaman (Association of Washington School Principals), Tom Fitzsimmons (Independent Colleges of Washington)

WSAC Staff- Anne Messerly, Noreen Light, Randy Spaulding

**Overview**

* Welcome and Introductions
* Updates
* Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Research Agenda
* Communications and Managing Expectation for Smarter Balanced Scores
* Achieve Meeting
* Sustainability/Next Steps
* Wrap-up

All meeting materials for this meeting are available on our [Wiki](http://improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com/January+6+Meeting).

**Welcome and Introductions**

WSAC reviewed the agenda and introduced a special guest at our meeting, Joe Willhoft, former executive director of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Joe Willhoft will speak today about research plans for SBAC, and give us some background. Then we will hear from Chris Barron from Partnership for Learning about what Ready WA is doing to communicate about the Smarter Balanced Assessment and supporting their implementation. We will close by reflecting on the group’s purpose and discussing next steps.

**Updates**

*Race to the Top Higher Education Meeting*

Representatives from eight leading states, the two test consortia, and SHEEO met with US Department of Education in Washington DC on Dec. 19th to discuss support for Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and implementation of the new assessments developed by the consortia. Washington and California were asked to speak about the work their state has already done, since they have both had an early start implementing CCSS, and have had a focus on college and career readiness initiatives. States shared ideas and discussed how the Department of Education could support states’ work. WSAC shared a [College Readiness Timeline](http://improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com/file/view/CollegeReadinessTimeline.pdf/536799834/CollegeReadinessTimeline.pdf) for our state. [Click here](http://improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com/file/view/Higher%20ed%20convening%20DRAFT%20agenda_sent_2014_1202.pdf/537153498/Higher%20ed%20convening%20DRAFT%20agenda_sent_2014_1202.pdf) to view the meeting agenda.

*Title II RFP*

WSAC administers the Educators for the 21st Century Competitive Grant Program, which is federally funded under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This provides partnership grants for professional development projects serving K-12 educators. WSAC released a request for proposals to use the Smarter Balanced interim assessment to improve student learning. Up to $900,000 is available to fund one or more projects to serve the state’s nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs). For more information, please visit WSAC’s [website](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/21-educators).

*Modified Smarter Balanced Agreement*

The modified Smarter Balanced Agreement is a technical fix for the Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) only. Currently, it is not clear that the assessment scores can be used for entrance to credit-bearing coursework for students in Running Start. This clarifies the agreement.

*Dual Credit*

The Governor’s budget contains funding to support college in the high school for low income students. The associated bill had not been prefiled. There were two prefiled bills relating to dual credit that would allow 10th grade students to enroll and receive credit for College in the High School courses ([HB 1081](http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1081.pdf) and [HB 1031](http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1031.pdf)).

*Spring Cross-state Meeting*

The upcoming cross-state meeting will be In March or April on the East Coast or Midwest. The meeting is an opportunity for team members to meet state leaders and discuss progress and issues with Common Core implementation in other states. The NGA will pay for seven team members to attend (one from each agency/organization listed in the grant). If members are not able to attend, we will open it up to the larger group. WSAC will send more information on date and location as it becomes available.

**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Research Agenda- Joe Willhoft**

Joe Willhoft, former executive director of the Smarter Balanced Consortium, joined the ISLS group to discuss background about how the Smarter Balanced Assessment was developed, some of the advances in this particular assessment compared to others that are available, and how Smarter Balanced will assess the test as we move forward to ensure that it is a good measure of college and career readiness.

*Presentation*

* Until a few years ago state testing was driven by what test companies had available and were not necessarily closely aligned with the curriculum in a given state. As the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) testing requirements took effect states needed to ensure that the accountability tests aligned with their state learning standards. This created an environment where testing companies were forced to customize their instruments and were undercutting one another to win contracts in each state. During this time, the testing companies struggled because it had become such a competitive environment.
* The landscape changed soon after that as stated adopted the CCSS and joined together to establish Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).
* The SB assessment is different from others tests like SAT or ACT because it is member owned instead of being owned by a testing company. Member states receive technical support from SBAC.
* Because of this, the SB agenda is driven by the needs of the member states. Washington is in an especially good position to help define the research agenda to support our continued implementation of the assessments and related agreements for placement.
* Under the US Dept. of Education grant Smarter Balanced housed in OSPI, now they are at UCLA at CRESST (National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing). CRESST is in an outstanding position to support the consortium and the ongoing research and evaluation needed to ensure the test is meeting the needs of states.

Joe Willhoft reviewed the charts on page 1-2 of the [Smarter Balanced handout](http://improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com/file/view/SmarterBalanced_Handouts.pdf/536799920/SmarterBalanced_Handouts.pdf).

Smarter Balanced pilot study results for student achievement closely align with how students have performed on NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress). Also, they both have similar definitions of college readiness and preparedness.

NAEP drew on data from the SAT and looked for connections between NAEP and the SAT to determine what scores indicate a student is college ready. What they found is that 36%-39% of the nation’s 12th grade students are ready to enter credit bearing courses. This is very close to the estimated achievement levels of 3 and 4 for the SB assessment.

*Discussion*

Q. How do we communicate with students and parents an expectation that all kids go to college, especially for the students who score low?

A. Communicate small achievements and improvement. Remember that students may improve and show growth on the SB assessment but stay within the same achievement level. Give a positive and encouraging message to these kids too.

Q. The graph on page 2 that shows achievement levels for scores 1, 2, 3, and 4 looks like it may have a correlation with what type of college a student attends. For example, the blue would be top 10-15% of students go to 4 year colleges, the yellow would be the 25-30% of students who go to community and technical colleges, and the green would be a mix of the two.

A. This is an interesting idea and very possible. However, there is no current data to back it up.

Q. How is the SB assessment aligned with current high school proficiency and graduation requirements?

A. SB assessment is aligned to the current high school learning standards. However, it is a more rigorous standards and a different expectation than previously. The new expectation is entrance to credit bearing college courses. That is likely a higher bar than most states would want to set for high school graduation.

Q. Is there a difference in student results between having a testing requirement for high school graduation vs. not having one?

A. In the research we’ve reviewed at SBAC we have not seen that.

Q. In addition to the four bars shown on page 2 (students who score 1-4), there is a 5th bar not shown which is students who drop out. How do we communicate that kids are not college ready but improving?

A. We often short change the career aspect of college and career readiness. SB developed a career readiness standards based on your SB score but found that could potentially be limiting (i.e. students who score x can do y). SBAC is currently having more conversation about this, because it is an important aspect of college and career readiness.

Q. Has there been analysis on what type of students are falling into level 1?

A. There are some tables on SBAC’s website. We see similar disparities as other tests (e.g. ELL, special education, racial and ethnic diversity, free and reduced lunch).

Q. How do we describe students who score a level 1?

A. SBAC has achievement level descriptors for students who score at each level. The descriptors are in terms of what the students CAN do versus what students’ cannot do.

Q. Why is the SB assessment administered in 11th grade when most others assessments have been administered in 10th grade?

A. The primary reason for this is that we wanted to assess student’s college readiness. If we do the assessment too early college would be unlikely to recognize the test for placement into credit bearing coursework but if we wait until 12th grade there is no opportunity for students to improve prior to completing high school. There is really no point telling a student they are not college ready if there is no opportunity to improve. This is why the senior year transition courses are so important.

Q. Should we be giving college credit to students who score a 4 on the SB assessment?

A. Not sure but that would be a great conversation to have with your state.

*Presentation, Cont’d*

There is every reason to expect that scores will improve in 2015 because 2014 was just the pilot. Now many schools have experience in administering the assessment and students have experience on a computer-based assessment so for those schools and students it should be smoother administration. In addition, students will have received an additional year of instruction with the CCSS. SB is a fair and unbiased test for ELL students and students with disabilities. It has adaptive testing--- it still follows a test blueprint, but particular questions’ level of difficulty will change depending on the student’s response to the previous question. This will allow the students who find the material easy to be challenged and the students who are struggling to get slightly easier questions. In the end, everyone leaves thinking it was a difficult test.

Research Elements:

1. Alignment
   * Does the SB assess CCSS accurately?
   * Most like yes, however the SB assessment does not assess speaking, presenting, or collaboration
2. Validity
   * Does the SB assess a level of college readiness?
   * To test this, see if there’s a way to give the test to current college freshman. However, it is difficult to get this population to take an assessment, even with an incentive.

To answer these questions, Washington should look at work of Washington State University (WSU) Social & Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) when they analyzed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). [Click here to view the report](http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/pdf/WASL-CC%20placement.pdf)- *Relationship Between the WASL and Placement Tests Used by Community and Technical Colleges* by SESRC.

Washington also has a great longitudinal data system, and could use their tracking of College Bound students. Washington should continue to collaborate with education agencies and organizations. Once Washington determines what their research agenda will be, SBAC and CRESST will support them. This will also validate the SB agreements of the CTCs and the 4 year baccalaureates.

**Communications and Managing Expectations for the Smarter Balanced Assessments**

Chris Barron gave us an update on ReadyWA and discussed how we communicate about the CCSS and the SB Assessment to support implementation of the standards and the assessments.

* ReadyWA received a grant from State Farm to mail copies of the [infographic](http://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2014.11.17.CCSS.parents-students.infographic.pdf) that the ISLS group created to school districts. In addition, they are almost finished developing a Prezi presentation which will be a narrative to the infographic.
* Received a grant from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) for parent outreach.
* ReadyWA is became a member of the Achieve Coalition Network.
* The grant that supports ReadyWA will end when the Smarter Balanced scores come out. We want to make sure we manage expectations for the scores appropriately before the grant ends. Our outreach work relating to this includes an ad flight on National Public Radio (NPR) and an ad in the Seattle Times.
* ReadyWA is working with the Techer Voices Network to look for teachers who participated in the SB field test to explain and show the parents and public what the test is about.
  + ISLS members suggested including teachers who have also participated in the pilot of Bridge to College transition courses, SBAC item development, and/or SBAC achievement level setting.
* ReadyWA is creating a video to explain the differences between formative, summative, and interim exams.

**Achieve Annual Summit**

Chris Barron briefly discussed the main points that came from the Annual Achieve Meeting on Dec. 11-12. He shared their results from a national survey that was conducted from 2011-2014 high school graduates. To view the whole PowerPoint, [please click here](http://improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com/file/view/Opening%20Session%20PPT_UPDATED_EXTERNAL.pdf/536800210/Opening%20Session%20PPT_UPDATED_EXTERNAL.pdf).

*Findings*

* Nearly half of recent high school graduates report they were not fully prepared for their next steps
  + Only one quarter feel their high school set high expectations
  + Over one quarter wish their high school had done a better job in key areas: study habits, communications, and math
  + Four in ten current students find college more difficult than expected
* They see clear gaps in their preparation, and this has real consequences:
* Recent grads tell us they would have worked harder if they had fully understood the challenges that lay ahead
* Both college students AND non-college students report not having as much academic preparation as they needed
* Recent Grads—whether they are in college or working—feel better prepared if they took more advanced courses in high school

*Solutions*

* The research suggests that providing real academic challenge for high school students and communicating with them about what is needed for future success helps to better prepare grads for the road ahead
* Providing consistent and regular signals to ALL high school students about what academics are needed to be ready for college and careers is key:
  + Set rigorous expectations, students will rise to the challenge
  + Have graduation requirements that ensure academic preparation for all
  + Encourage all students to take the most advanced classes
  + Ensure the rigor of classes offered; reliance on course titles can lead to watered down courses
  + Communicate with students early in high school (if not before) about the expectations and skills (including courses) needed for future success—including college admissions and career interests
  + Regularly tell students whether they are “on track”
  + Tie learning in high school to life outside the classroom by providing real-world learning opportunities
  + Provide support/help for students who need it (e.g. tutoring)
  + All means ALL. Be sure all students understand and know the benefit of academic preparation for college and careers; everyone needs to be prepared for their next steps.

**Sustainability/ Next Steps**

The ISLS grant which supports our work ends in June 2015. WSAC asked the group to reflect on what’s been valuable to them about this group, and if they would like to continue meeting after the grant ends. Members indicated that the group has been helpful and they would like to find a way to continue to meet. The members provided a number of comments to help staff plan for future work.

*Group feedback/ Suggestions:*

* More practitioner feedback is needed
* Valuable conversation but there is more work to be done
* We’ve done a good job aligning our systems
* Keep this group going but see if it possibly fits into any other efforts
* Look for another grant to fund the group’s work
* Have a clear purpose and clear goals that the group is going to accomplish
* There is a place to tighten our efforts with ReadyWA
* Meet more often
* Make this a K-20 effort
* More discussion and about Career readiness.

*Questions left to address:*

* How do we effectively help low-scoring students succeed?
* How do we communicate to students who score a 1 and 2?
* How does our work merge with ReadyWA?
* What is the level for membership of the group? Should members be executive directors or staff more closely involved in the work?

**Wrap-up**

WSAC staff will be in touch with you relating to the cross-state meeting, and will send out a Doodle Poll for the next team meeting. During our next team meeting, we will focus on planning for 2015.

***Group Homework:***

**Where do we need to apply ourselves as a group next? What issues or areas need our attention?**

Next Cross-state Meeting: TBD, March/April

Next Team Meeting: TBD, May/June, Olympia

*For questions and/or comments, please contact:*

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